/133 cont./

made for sale, the guardian gives him a small sum out of the money gained. At 14 an adolescent begins to satisfy nearly all his own needs.

For example, from June to December, 1956, Tasa (14 years), son of Fintiman (Boniville) had earned about 13,000 francs:

June	helped his father build a large boat for the administration (45 days)	6,000
October	went to Saint-Laurent as auxiliary bossman .	3,000
December	helped convoy a boat of the border-fixing mission sent back empty to Maripasoula . .	4,000
		13,000

His father, entrusted with his education, let him use this money in his own way; he pointed out to us with pride that for the first time in 1956 his son had been able to satisfy all his own needs, but that it was important to keep him under a firm hand until he was capable of doing a man's work alone: for that, five or six years of apprenticeship would not be too much.

In fact, many times we had the chance to verify it, it is in this prolonged apprenticeship that are developed the seriousness of mind and the technical skill so remarkable among the Refugee Blacks. At 20 years, most of them still do not know how to do anything worthwhile, and it is scarcely before 25 or 27 that they become capable of /134/ painstaking work; in this respect the present tendency of the young boys toward precocious emancipation (the marriage age of men is going down to 20 and even 18 years) runs the risk of having very unfortunate consequences for the future of the Refugee Blacks.

The person charged with the education of a girl exercises the powers of a mother toward her. It is she who authorizes her to marry, and by giving her the pangi, married women's garment, gives her symbolically her freedom as a woman. It is to her that the first husband pays the price of the virginity of the girl.

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153 791 789 796 535 [868] --Pupils are taught, individually or collectively, to dance in the manner of the god. Indeed, each divinity has a characteristic form of dance, which it executes sometimes by using the bodies of its bearers when it comes into them. The pupil must imitate as best he can the individual movements and the rhythm of this dance, while the teacher, using the appropriate drum, beats out the calling formulas.

If the god is satisfied with the student, he will be able to come into him.

791 787 785 153 These exercises appear to have as their goal the creation in the pupils of forms of conditioned reflexes; they have nothing in common with the very harsh ordeals which the medicine man of the Guiana Indians imposes upon himself, and do not involve any form of asceticism. It does not seem that chastity, even temporary, is demanded of the student, any more than fasting or doing anything contrary to his inclinations.

787 791 The idea of a spiritual death and resurrection of the possessed person, with all the ritual it entails: long reclusion of the neophytes, change of name of the one possessed, who is supposed to relearn all the activities of ordinary life, does not appear to have been kept by the Refugee Blacks. In a general [152] way, the atmosphere of solemn seriousness, /203/ of secrecy, and of fear, which characterize the Dahomey cults of possession is not found among them.

791 787 435 [436] These lessons are always paid for and are even very expensive. Payment is made in pieces of cloth, in demijohns of tafia.

Having a Kumenti amounted in 1958 to at least 25,000 francs. This payment is not only compensation for the teacher; [181] it is the mark of legitimacy. What has not been paid for is not, for the Refugee Blacks, legitimately acquired. We shall come back to this important point later.

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153 789 791 Possession begins progressively; in the beginning the divinity does not find in its bearer sufficient passivity, it does not succeed well in expressing itself through his mouth, spectators observe only incoherent gestures and hear only unintelligible stammerings. The pupil must continue his training for a long time in order to become a suitable bearer.

789 The god, when it has just entered a man, always begins by rendering homage in its language to Masa Gadu, proclaiming that it acts only in his name and by his will.

[576] [198] Then it greets those present, employing formulas which are the exact transposition into its language of the ordinary Boni formulas of politeness; that even if it is getting ready to speak to them in the harshest manner.

The god speaks then in its language, saying not very intelligible things to the audience that appear to be related to what goes on in its country, to its family (for it is believed that these lower gods have a family). Finally, it begins to speak in ordinary language in order to be understood by those present, and answers questions.

796 789 825 Various categories of gods capable of bringing on possession. The Refugee Blacks assume that four categories of lower gods exist:

The first category consists of a series of gods which present themselves to men under very different aspects but which are nevertheless felt to be of the same nature. All speak the Kumenti language, all are well disposed toward men and do not exercise against them the kunu, that is, the curse;

--The Kumenti, which have the appearance of jaguars and live in the bush;

--The Djadja, which have the appearance of ocelots;

--The Opete, which have the appearance of the urubu and which reside in the air;

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776 The Kumẽnti. These gods are common to the Saramaka
787 (Kromenti) (1), Djuka, and Boni. The Kumẽnti are considered
[184]

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1. There is no doubt about the origin of this word; it is a deformation of Coromantin, name given in the 18th century to Ashanti country. The "Coromantin Negroes," reputed to be particularly intractable, played a large role in the slave revolts. The Kumenti cult of possession must originally have been a cult peculiar to the Coromantin nation.

to be benevolent gods and friends of men, so their possession is very much desired. They do not come into men spontaneously, they are obtained only by applying to a teacher. In principle
[562] only men can obtain Kumẽnti, while on the other hand only women can have Bũnzunki /sic/.

776 The Kumẽnti are specialized in protection against fire
787 and against machete and gun wounds. These dangers hold the
751 largest place among the anxieties of the Refugee Blacks, who spend almost all their life in the bush and with whom nearly
[789] all sores become infected and have serious consequences. Thus the Kumẽnti cult holds an important place in their magic; even someone who is not possessed will try to obtain from these gods an ɔbia that will protect him from these various dangers.

153 The instruction of the disciples of these gods takes as its
791 pattern the procedures described above, but the collective dances
787 appear to play an essential part. The teacher calls on the gods
786 by beating a special rhythm on ordinary drums (apinti) and by
[533] uttering invocations punctuated by the rattle of the saka (Indian
[534] maraka, that is, hollow calabash provided with a handle and containing seeds).

153 /206 cont./
791 containing seeds). Sometimes, when a god has entered a pupil,
787 the teacher puts the latter's passivity to the test by insulting the
786 god with the help of the drum. The Kumẽnti gets angry, breaks
[789] bottles and swallows ground glass, walks in the fire, hits himself with machete blows, all without any wound resulting, they say, on the body of its bearer.

[302] These frenzied dances, whose participants completely covered with pɛmba (white clay) are as if hallucinated, have a bizarre aspect which is perceptible to some of the Boni themselves. They do not have any secret character and constitute,
[522] on the contrary, a fine spectacle for the village people. The spectators double up with laughter at the contortions and strange
[521] actions which the gods inspire in those possessed. They are talked about at length /207/ afterward in the evenings, humorists imitating what they saw done there, without any fear whatever of irritating the gods.

791 Each "teacher for Kumẽnti" owns a small gadu ɔsu in
787 which are lined up the implements of the cult. One finds in
346 general in these chapels a post crudely carved in the shape of a human bust, a block of stone, jaguar skulls, some kɔkɔti (shrub stalks with a spontaneous double bend, thought to be the prop of spirits in the bush), and a saka (maraka), the whole sprinkled with white clay (pɛmba). One finds also beside the door a seat and a trough which are used for the ablutions of the pupils.

153 While bathing his body with the infusion of leaves pre-
791 pared by the teacher, the neophyte repeats, in ordinary language,
787 a series of invocations: "Come to me, enter into me. But be-
788 fore entering into me, it is necessary to teach me the things of thy country; O God, when thou art in me, may I be able to dance on broken glass without its cutting me; may I be able to dance in fire without its burning me. If tomorrow someone takes a machete to hurt me, he shall not be able to come forward. If someone takes a gun to shoot me, (his weapon) must break, must not be able to take off. If someone is sick, make an ɔbia for him, he must recover."

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153 791 787 The teacher has the pupil turn in a circle around the mortar in which has been prepared the infusion of leaves, until he is dizzy. Alternately he makes him turn and "washes" his body with the infusion. Possession occurs by itself at the end of a certain number of sessions.

[276] [191] In the practices intended to make the gita of Kumẽnti "rise," the absorption of toxic substances enters, especially tobacco juice, method employed by the Indian medicine men. But once the reflexes are created, there is no further need for these substances; the gita appears as soon as the calling procedures are used, which are of two kinds:

--Personal procedures: The man voluntarily calls on his gita while putting on the god's costume and taking a certain posture;

--Outside procedures: The gita may be released from outside either by calling the god by name or by beating the corresponding rhythm on the drum.

787 158 When the pupil begins to feel the gita of Kumẽnti, that is first manifested by trances. We have very often been present at these attacks, which usually come on at night in the forest, but commonly also during the day. The one possessed suddenly lets go of the objects he was holding (for example, if he was in the process of eating, he drops plate and spoon), and rushes forward running through the forest howling rhythmically as if he had become an animal. His eyes are rolled upward, he no longer is conscious of his surroundings; he is not in any way threatening; these fits are totally inoffensive in spite of their [147] impressive aspect. One sees possessed people in this state do things which are difficult to explain, such as running in complete darkness in the most impenetrable underbrush without falling or hurting themselves, or climbing up in a few seconds on a craggy rock which would have been hard to scale in full daylight.

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153 791 787 [195] In proportion as the pupil perfects himself, the god expresses itself more easily with the help of his body, begins to do coordinated acts and to speak. They say that the gita has been "arranged" (seeka). The Kumẽnti speak with a gruff, jerky voice, characteristic, which humorists love to imitate in the evenings' recitals.

In order to call on his gita voluntarily, the pupil crouches down, feet together, throwing pemba from right to left at the level of his feet and uttering the formula: "O Kumẽnti, djumpo ku a mi." Then he remains immobile in this position and waits; possession takes place generally at the end of a few minutes.

776 787 The Kumẽnti which enter thus into men are exclusively male gods; it is known that they have wives because they talk about them, but they never manifest themselves.

[812] The Kumẽnti are generally benevolent; still, no more than any divinity of the Refugee Blacks, do they represent a principle of goodness and justice in itself. They watch in a partial fashion over the interests of their bearers. Thus it is that A..., of the Dipélu II lo, has a Kumẽnti which reacts in a violent way when it has the impression that danger threatens [158] its bearer. It enters into him suddenly, takes a machete and storms through the village, while people prudently barricade themselves in their houses.

787 789 In certain circumstances, when their trances are particularly intense, the people possessed by Kumẽnti are capable, it is said, of walking in fire, dancing on broken glass, climbing thorny awara palm trees, and even having themselves struck with blows of a machete without any wound resulting from it. Professor de Goeje gives impressive personal testimony on this subject, such as the case of a possessed man who overturned a pail of boiling water on his body (1). Mr. Mathieu, Director of

1. In a note in Mr. W.F. van Lier's work, § 37.

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776 [825] The Bumba gadu, other gods of the same nature and equally feared, have as bearers other categories of snakes, principally the great anaconda water snakes.

[784] [82] The Voodū, we have said, are feared; they can exercise on a lineage the collective curse called kunu. But, no more than the Kumēnti do not represent a principle of good, they do not represent a principle of evil. Not all are so badly disposed toward men, and even if one of them is the enemy of a lineage, it is not for that reason badly disposed toward the rest of men.

787 178 [562] However this may be, the cult of possession of the Papa gadu is not at all in decline among the Boni. According to the cross-checking we have been able to do, of the 670 persons living on the French bank there are at least 40 to 50 who have a Papa gadu, the great majority of them old women.

787 784 /211/ The Voodū /sic/ are much feared, and for that very reason much respected. They are oracles which are consulted very often, without consideration of the evil their kunu has done and will still do. A god which exercises the kunu but which is provisionally declared appeased may be consulted without danger; it is always assumed that in any case its bearer, if he respects its commands, has nothing to fear from it.

787 562 It is possible that, very unconsciously, women use the fear that the Papa gadu gods inspire in order to maintain their independence and privileged position in Refugee Black society.

153 791 787 [198] [178] [515] [824] [534] Instruction in possession appears to take as a pattern the same principles as that which correspond to the Kumēnti. It involves the teaching of the Papa language; this language appeared to us to be in decline; in fact, it is used only for formulas of greeting; then the possessed people vaticinate in ordinary language. Instruction in possession also involves daily ablutions with decoctions of leaves; certain of these mixtures are particularly complicated (it is said that they include more than a hundred different kinds of leaves). Instruction is essentially individual; however it also includes dances; on this occasion a

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153 791 789 534 special drum is used, about two meters long and very narrow, devoid of any decoration, which is called lãŋga dɔ̃ or papa dɔ̃.

787 [562] To call on her gita, the possessed woman (they are almost always women) stands, puts on a piece of cloth which she always keeps nearby and always takes along with her when she travels: this is the garment of the god; it consists of a sort of scarf crossed in front; then she throws white clay, pemba, on her feet from right to left and left to right while invoking the god. Possession is almost immediate. One sees the woman's eyes roll up and her expression become haggard. The god does not cover himself entirely with pemba like the Kumẽnti, he makes himself a sort of headband on the forehead with white clay.

787 788 539 [782] He begins with an invocation to Masa Gadu said in ordinary language.

"Masa gadu, gi mi pimisi, beka mi na pikin nẽŋge; ala sani di mi ɔ taki, na yu mu gi mi kaakiti, beka na yu abi mi kaakiti, da mi ɲyãfalu gi yu."

"Masa Gadu, I implore you, for I am a humble creature; (in) all that I am going to say, it is you who will give me strength, for my strength is in you; I shall exalt you."

787 788 [198] Next come formulas of welcome to those present, which are the exact translation of the formulas of greeting of everyday life, then songs, all in the Papa language. After about a quarter of an hour, it enters a hut and sits down, answering in ordinary language the questions of those present, always in a singing tone.

787 Possession by Papa gadu does not have the bestial character of possession by Kumẽnti; outside of the dances, it does not involve brutish gestures or bizarre acts; the possessed woman hums softly in a shrill voice, moving with graceful gestures.

[531] /212/ Sometimes she draws strange signs on the huts; the Boni state that that is a kind of writing, that other possessed people